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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a project that was conducted in six Norfolk, Virginia, public secondary schools to explore the problems associated with the disproportionate involvement of black student in disciplinary actions. The paper also relates the project's efforts to implement changes in the school system that the research activities indicated might be successful in reducing the number of black students involved in disciplinary actions. Background information on the school system is presented, and research activities that covered classroom organization, instructional techniques, school environment, the disciplinary atmosphere, and discipline programs and procedures are described. Findings and conclusions are outlined. Various programs designed in response to the initial research are discussed along with preliminary research and evaluation data concerning their effectiveness. These programs include: (1) a "Student Intervention Continuum" which focused on student motivation and self concept: (2) high schools: (3) a program of student leadership workshops and racism seminars: and (4) a process for developing parental involvement programs. (Author/APM)

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DISCIPLINARY ALTERNATIVES

FOR AN

URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

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The programs described in these pages and the research conducted was all a function of the total project staff of the ESAA Special Student Concerns Project for Discipline. However, particular members of the project staff have served as the primary architects of each of these efforts. I wish to note these relationships here for they have done outstanding work in developing what I feel to be truly exemplary projects with much potential. In addition, their collective and individual love and concern for the students that are the targets of these intervention s has been important and critical. They are listed with the programs that they developed in alphebetical order.

T. LaVerne Ricks-Brown, Student Intervention Continuum

Motivation Enhancement Program

Vicki L. Spriggs, Student Leadership Program and Racism Seminars

Process for Parental Involvement

Lawrence Woods, Motivation Enhancement Program

Individualized Teacher Inservice program (The model that has guided our interactions with teachers, our inservice sessions, and demonstration relationships

DISCIPLINARY ALTERNATIVES

FOR AN

URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Introduction

The project that is the subject of this research paper was funded by the Emergency School Aid Act, Special Student Concerns Section, of the United States Office of Education. The project is a cooperative venture of the Norfolk Public School System and Old Dominion University's School of Education in Norfolk Virginia. The project's primary purpose was to conduct research into problems associated with the disproportionate involvement of Black students in disciplinary actions in Norfolk's secondary schools. We have conducted our research in a cross-section of six of Norfolk's secondary schools from the Fall of 1979 to the present.

The Norfolk Public School System is like most other urban school systems on dimensions of school failure and discipline. The school age population is approxiamtely 55% Black. However, over 75% of the disciplinary actions in secondary schools involves Black students. Though the school system and several community organizations had taken a diversity of steps to attempt to rectify these problems, very little had changed in the numbers and percentages of Black students involved in disciplinary actions since the school system was first integrated in the 1970 - 1971 school year. This project represented yet another attempt to address and rectify problems associated with the education of Black students and their disproportionate involvement in disciplinary actions.

The project's secondary purpose was to engage with the school system in the implementation of changes indicated necessary and feasible by the conclusions of project research activities that might serve to reduce the disproportionate involvement of Black students in disciplinary actions.

This paper intends to:

1. Present background information on the school system that is relevant to this study.

2. Describe first year research activities and results.

And.

3. Describe second year innovation and change programs along with preliminary research and evaluation data concerning their effectiveness.

Background

The Norfolk school system is a moderately sized school system in Southeastern Virginia serving approximately 30,000 students in grades K-12. An increasing Black population, a decreasing white population, and the enrollment of large numbers of white students in private schools has caused a steady increase in the numbers of Black students served by the school system over the past several years. This increase has gone from approximately 30% in 1971 to 55% in 1980. The overwhelming majority of the Black population in the city is poor and lower/working class.

The economic sector is primarily composed of military bases, naval shipyards, a very busy international harbor, diverse manufacturing enterprises, trucking industry, and educational enterprises. Large numbers of non-white residents work in these various aspects of the area economy with somewhat smaller numbers classified as poor and receiving benefits. Black-owned business is limited to a small banking enterprise, service companies, and minor real estate operations.

The school system is composed of a teaching staff that is approximately 51% Black, with a 12% Black administrative staff. There are five high schools, eight junior high schools, and a large number of elementary schools. These are supplemented by a transition high school for "chrnic behavior problem" students, a technical school, a vocational school, a career academy, and programs for pregnant teenage girls.

The school system is highly centralized with regional accountability systems, uniform organizational and curriculat formats, and unifcrm disciplinary codes and punishment systems. Within this situation, however, wide differences can be found among schools on disciplinary statistics, some environmental factors and the nature of building leadership.

Since desegregation in the 1970-1971 school year, several changes and innovations have been adopted in part to attempt to rectify racial problems in the schools, to attempt to provide adequate educational programs for all students, and to attempt to reduce discipline problems in the schools. In the mid-1970's. the school system implemented a program of Phased-Electives in secondary schools to increase student choices, allow school flexibility to meet diverse needs, and allow teachers to respond to special concerns and needs. This program has been highly controversial since inception. Within this framework, the school system's

department of instruction has carried out massive curriculum revisions, particularly in social studies and language arts to include content and objectives that are multiculatural with particular emphases on Black American history, social and political issues, and literature. In addition, new courses were added that focused on helping students more systematically examine life issues, developing student self-concept and values clarification.

During the late 1970's, this school system, like so many others, saw sharp increases in the number and severity of discipline problems and random racial conflicts. Failure ratrs of Black students increased somewhat along with large increases in Black student involvement in disciplinary actions. The public outcry and attacks prompted the school system to systematize disciplinary codes, create new rulings concerning drugs, alcohol and weapons and to create stiffer, mandatory penalties for severe infractions. Simultaneously, the school system began to engage in more study of their discipline problems. Among the more important studies were several that this project were based on: (1) A Proposed Model of Justice: A Report of the Crime Resistance Education Committee (1977) conducted and compiled by a school system/community team examining discipline and race relations in the school system. (2) School Team Pilot Program for Preventing and Reducing Crime and Disruptive Behavior a junior high school program of developing positive student leadership for advising school administration and assisting in the monitoring student behavior in critical school physical environments. In addition to those efforts by the school system itself were several studies and documents produced by community organizations snd other agencies; most notably, a report by the city's NAACP on curriclum race and discipline in the school system, and a report by the city's Juvenile court recommending programs for students with severe disciplinary histories.

All of the studies listed above were system-wide examinations looking at those concerns that affected all schools in the city. The focus of this project was to construct and carry out school specific research and development based upon the results and findings of these previous studies.

Project Year One: Research Conducted

This project operated from a multicultural framework in examining discipline in secondary schools. This multicultural framework begins with several assumptions. First of all, it assumes the existence of vast cultural and experiential differences between Black students and white students and between Black students and most teachers (Brown, 1978; Gold, Grant and Rivlin , 1977; Ogbu, 1974 and 1978; and Van Brunt(ed.), 1979). Second, it assumes that the basic structure and programs of public schools inadvertently serve white students better than Blacks. Third, it assumes that Black and other lower class and poor parents have few avenues of access and very little power to affect large school systems. Fourth, it assumes that -- given the factors or assumptions above, that several parameters of schooling must be altered to increase the success of Black students and reduce their involvement in disciplinary actions. We believe that merely changing minor aspects of teacher attitudes and instructional strategies, or implementing new classroom management strategies, or publishing new curriculum guides, will not measurably alter the educational success of Black students in and of themselves.

From this multicultural perspective and the data available in the several studies named earlier, project staff began to develop or design its research plans. We first operationalized (specified through a formal procedure) the characteristics of multiculralism as an educational approach. Next, we isolated and codified the issues apparent in the several studies already named along with other data supplied by the school system. Through interaction with teachers, students and administrators in each of the six project site schools and conversations with parents and representative s of community organizations, we allocated or designed research activities for each school based upon what appeared to be school-specific manifestations of system-wide problems. Our first year activities included the following:

Classroom and Instruction

1. Research on locus-of-control in junior high and high school classrooms. We developed and executed an experimental design using the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale ( ) with nine week pre- and post-testing in eight experimental and eight control classrooms in two junior high and one high school.

2. Structured, random observations of classroom interactions, teaching approaches, and student behaviors.

3. Student designed and conducted survey questionnaires of students on the characteristics of effective teachers in high schools.

4. Survey questionnaires of student perceptions of effective teaching and learning in the junior high school.

5. An examination of the multicultural nature of the school system's curricula in social studies and language arts using various multicultural assessment devices.

School Environment and Disciplinary Atmosphere

1. Random, informal observations in disciplinary offices in the six site schools.

2. Student interviews on the nature of discipline and race relations in the six site schools. A selection of ten students in each site school with minor to severe discipline histories and average to poor academic histories.

3. Assessment of school staff perceptions of the organizational environments in two junior high schools using the School Organizational Environment Assessment Instrument (Brown and Pine, 1978).

4. Project staff informal observations in school halls and cafeterias in the six site schools.

5. A force-field analysis of school organizational structures and discerned student needs.

6. A survey of teacher-perceived human relations problems and issues in one high school.

Discipline Programs and Procedures

1. Observation and examination of in-school suspension programs in four junior high schools. We examined program types, clientele served, student perceptions, school use procedures, recidivism and impact.

2. A checklist examination of the school systems' rules and regulations.

3. An examination and codification of individual school policies, rules and regulations. We compared these with expert legal statements of student rights and responsibilities (Apple, 1978; NEA 1980).

4. An investigation of student avenues for redress, due process procedures and student issue forums.

Other

A critical study that initiated this project was an experimental intervention examination of the aggravation of discipline problems in junior high schools that began on a minor scale in elementary school (Stokes, 1979).

In addition to these research activities, the project established a parent, teacher and student workgroup in each school to assist project staff in the naming and examination of discipline problems and issues, and a Principal's Council composed of site school principals and assistant principals. This

forum was used for the presentation of project data, the discussion of discipline concerns and issues, and the sharing of perspectives, approaches and techniques to particular problems and issues. Several other minor data collection activities were also engaged in.

First Year Findings and Conclusions

The results and conclusions from our first year research activities are tentative. Given the breadth of the project, we were necessarily selective and many of our studies were not as thorough as possible. In addition, we claim little in the way of generalizability to other school systems in other cities. However, our collective experiences in several other urban school systems leads us to believe that these same results would be reproduced in similar cities or if more rigorous studies were conducted. Below, we present our findings and conclusions in the categories outlined above in which our research efforts were reported:

Classroom and Instruction

1. Student locus-of-control can be positively altered or made more internal through the implementation of minor alterations in teaching strategies over a five-week period (Frank, 1980). However we found no correlation between locus-of-control and academic achievement as assessed through student grades and teacher-made tests.

2. With minor variations, instructional practices in the school system are highly teacher-centered. Teacher control is the dominant theme drawn from our observations. Few teachers were observed using student-centered instructional practices or approaches that deviated from a format of lecture, question and answer, paper and pen tests, etc.

3. According to a structured sample of 75 students in one high school and one junior high school, there are several identifiable aspects of a "good" teacher. A good teacher shows respect toward students, exhibits concern for all of his/her students, tries different ways to help all students learn, takes time out to talk about things that students are interested in, is "fair" to all of his/her students, expects all students to learn, and believes that all students can learn. These students also identified several identifiable characteristics of a "bad" teacher. A bad teacher shows disrespect toward students, will embarrass students, shows prejudice, has bad attitudes about students, and teaches only one way.

4. A great deal of work had been done by the school system's department of instruction since 1970 to update their curriculum. In social studies, several sections had been added concerning the history and sociology of Black and other non-White groups in American society. However, these

sections constituted either separate courses or separate units within regular social studies courses. In addition, very little of the material to be used was written by non-White authors. Also, most of the material and concepts to be presented were watered down conceptions of real historical events and complex sociological and political issues. These, in the view of the staff would not serve to appropriately enhance the education of Black students in the school system.

School Environment and Disciplinary Atmosphere

1. Our observations in the six site school disciplinary offices revealed vast differences between the schools. In one high school and two junior high schools, the following set of patterns emerged:

   a) Students could force choices of which disciplinarian they wished to see.

   b) These offices were always overloaded causing new rule infractions to occur between students.

   c) Administrators spent their entire day hurriedly processing discipline cases.

   d) No patterned relationship between the nature of the infraction and the punishment existed.

   e) The majority of the students in these offices were Black (80%).

   f) Severe violations of confidentiality occurred on a daily basis, i.e.; other students could easily overhear a disciplinarian's conversation with each student; some disciplinarians openly commented to other staff and faculty about particular students; records were often left lying about.

   In yet another junior high school, we found that teachers referred students to the office for nearly any reason and administrators were severe in their punishments. The discipline waiting area was almost always empty because of the large number of students remaining out on suspension.

2. Of the students interviewed all indicated that administrators and teachers were prejudiced toward Black students in disciplinary situations and provided a great deal of tentatively valid evidence to support their position. These cases will be investigated further.

3. Many students report that particular teachers are unfair to students. They did not specify the ways. Students also felt it was unfair for administrators to take the word of a teacher over students without investigation.

4. Both schools whose organizational environments were assessed showed poor environmental conditions. Schools in this system tend to be characterized by high levels of distrust between teachers and administrators, very little professional interaction among teachers, tight administrative control from the top.

5. In examining student needs (as assessed through interviews, surveys, observations, and professional literature) in relationship to school organizational structure, we concluded that departmentally organized junior high schools were probably not appropriate formats for the majority of students, parti-cularly Black students. This format was shown to have a potentially significant role in the escalation of discipline problems and the rise in the failure rate of students in the seventh grade over their sixth grade rates. The conflict and confusion apparent with several groups of students in their first year of junior high school was apparent throughout the city.

Discipline Programs and Procedures

1. Project examination found that the school system's rules, regulations and punishments are well within legal requirements set by the state and Federal courts and by the U.S. Office of Civil Rights. In addition, it was found that due process procedures in effect met all specifications set for long-term suspension and expulsion.

2. Beyond required due process procedures for long-term suspension and expulsion, we found that there existed no independent, functional avenues for student redress of injustice or the filing of formal complaints.

3. In-school suspension programs in the project site schools were found to be of two basic types: Long-term self-development or rehabilitative programs and short-term purely punitive programs. We found that the most effective program was one focused on student self-examination and self-development. This program exhibited the lowest recidivism rate, and showed a significant-smaller number of students graduating to out of school suspension. This program also exhibitied more definitive referall procedures and guidelines. Teachers, students and parents reported their feelings of effectiveness for the program.

Project Year Two: Research in Alternatives

The focus of the project in its second year was to: (1) Develop and implement educational programs that could serve to prevent discipline problems. (2) Develop and implement programs that could serve to demonstrate to the school system ways to reduce or eliminate discipline problems among students with a history of suspensions and academic failure. We developed and implemented a high school "Student Intervention Continuum," a Teaming Program for "High Risk" Ninth-Grade Students at the high school level, a Teaming Program for Junior High Schools, a program of Student Leadership Workshops and Racism Seminars, and a Process for Developing Parental Involvement Programs. Each of these programs will be described in the next several pages, including the evaluation/research designs

employed, and reports of preliminary results.

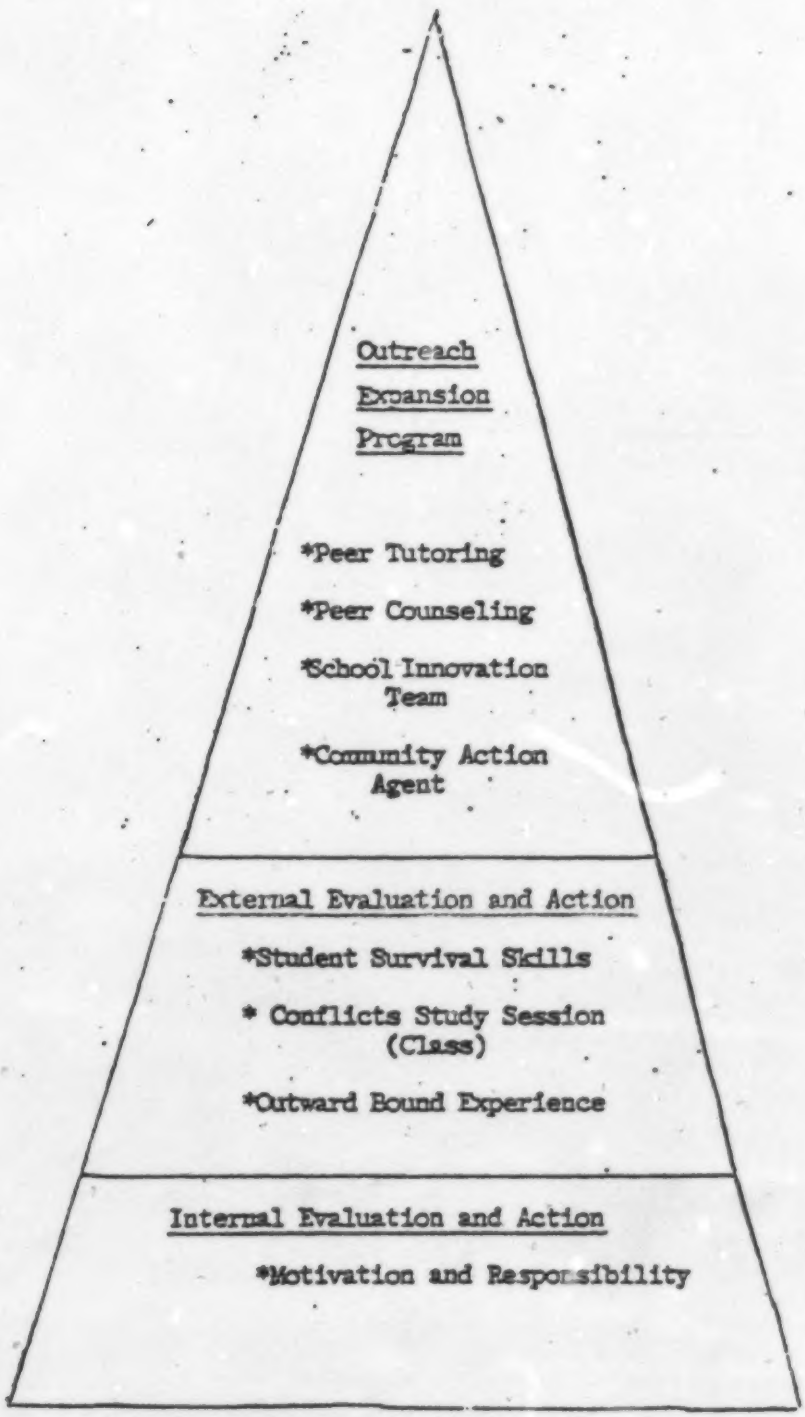
Student Intervention Continuum

The Student Intervention Continuum is an eclectically developed, one year sequentially organized program designed for high risk students in ninth and tenth grades. Over the past twenty year, an uncountable number of programs have been developed to "turn around" inner-city youth who participate in school disruptuions and exhibit histories of academic failure. Our examination of these programs reveals that most of them rely primarily upon a single concept or approach. Instead of attempting to replicate one of these programs , we sought to design a more comprehensive strategy that combined the most salient and promising characteristics of all of these efforts. Consequently, our program included: Self-concept enhancement activities, self-development, motivational parameters, conflict study, student-initiated activities, student survival skills, peer tutoring, goal setting, social responsibility enhancement, and black-oriented learning activities. Specifically, this program sought to:

1. Assist students to improvr self-concept through the examination of their personal behavior.
2. Engage students in self-development and motivational enhancement activities.
3. Develop critical consciousness in students concerning their general life and schooling issues.
4. Engage students in activities that can enhance personal values related to achievement (problem-solving, listening skills, library skills, self-management skills).
5. Counter negative views of learning and schooling in particular students.
6. Improve student attendance in classes.
7. Reduce the involvement of participating students in disciplinary actions.
8. Assist students to develop and pursue more appropriate personal goals based on a re-examination of their immediate and broader environments.
9. Engage students in responsible and meaningful tasks designed to create a positive impact on their school and community environments.

The first phase of the Student Intervention Continuum was called the Motivation and Responsibility class. This class carried elective social studies credit and was taught primarily by a regular social studies teacher in the site school with assistance and demonstration teaching from various project staff members. This phase of the program pursued the objectives listed above through several means: Analysis of TV characters (White Shadow, Good Times, What's Happening, etc)., Self analysis through values clarification strategies, Who Am I? exercises, examination of peer and friendship patterns, and discussion of several aspects of schooling and society (money, values, power, morality, etc.); the examination of situational behavior alternatives, and a day long trip to a nearby historical Black college.

Student Intervention Continuum



The first phase of the program met for nine weeks. At this writing, the second phase of the program is beginning. The second phase will include conflict study, student survival skills, a group trip to Washington D.C. to examine several aspects of Black history. The third and final phase of the program will largely involve outward movement including avenues to exercise social and personal responsibility, personal decision-making, volunteer work with community agencies and programs, and other activities as determined by student wishes and assessed needs.

Research/Evaluation Design. Students involved in the program were selected randomly from a pool of seventy-five students that had been suspended most frequently. This group constitutes 28 students. A control group of 28 students were also randomly selected from the pool of seventy-five. Initially, the design included pre- and post-testing the control and experimental groups on two scales of self-concept. Diaciplinary records (office referrals, detentions, suspensions), attendance records, and grades received would be monitored and tabulated for both groups during that half of the school year prior to program implementation and during program operation to monitor effects of the program. Experimental group students were also to be required to maintain logs on class activities and learnings. These types of data would be supplemented by periodic project staff interviews of each student and independent observations in class. Self-concept pre- and post-testing had to be removed from the design due to the school administration's inability to collect both groups of students for testing sessions and the refusal of experimental group students to participate fully in testing at the inception of the program.

Early Results. Disciplinary, attendance, and academic grade records were closely monitored during the first nine-week phase of the program. Students have participated in keeping daily logs or journals. The teacher involved and project staff involved in the program have maintained daily records of student observations and one round of student interviews have been conducted. From these several data sources, several indicators of present success have emerged. In their journals and during interviews students have stated that the course "the best I ever had." They have stated that in this class they feel capable and important and that they are excited about the things they do here. Students are attending this class at a higher rate than their other classes . They are also attending all of their

classes since program implementation at a higher rate than they were previously. These methods of monitoring project progress and success will be continued during the following phases of the program.

Teaming Programs at Junior High Schools

The project advocated teaming approaches at the junior high school level as a way of solodifying and providing consistency in learning environments for students and a way of causing instruction to become more coordinated and student-oriented. We felt that such an approach might serve to remove several of the factors that tend to cause or aggravate discipline problems in lower secondary schools Jones, 1980).

Our initial proposals called for 7th grade teaming programs at two junior high schools consisting of several programmatic characteristics:

1. A team of four teachers in English, social studies, math and science.
2. A random grouping of 50 students in sections of 25 students each.
3. A common planning period for the four teachers.
4. Each teacher would serve as a teacher-advisor for 12 or 13 students (parent contact, progress monitoring, referral, administrative and disciplinary intervention).

The program is designed to:

1. Reduce discipline problems and office referrals.
2. Improve student attendance.
3. Improve student grades.
4. Create greater group cohesion among the students involved.
5. Improve student perceptions of schooling.

Teachers are scheduled to meet as a team once a week to discuss individual student problems and needs, points of curriculum intersection, sharing instructional and classroom management techniques, and addressing new ways to meet student needs.

The program was not implemented as planned because school scheduling formats prevented the total scheduling of the program. What was implemented was a teaming approach in one junior high school that precluded team teaching. The team of four teachers was kept intact but with only one section of 25 students.

Research Design. Experimental and control groups of 25 students each were selected at random from a sample of all seventh graders. Both groups were pre-tested using the Classroom Environment Scale by Moos and Trickett (1974) and the Quality of School Life Scale by Epstein and McPartland (1977). Collectively, these two instruments consist of several subscales: Satisfaction with School, Reaction to Teachers, Feelings of Teacher Support, Order and Organization, Commitment to Classwork, Involvement in Class Activities. We utilized all seven subscales in composite. Some of the subscales aalso served as mutual checks on each other. Discipline and Attendance rates for experimental and control group students were to be monitored for the two school quarters prior to program implementation and during program operation. The design also called for scheduled classroom observations using observation protocols developed jointly by teachers in the team and project staff. Finally, teachers kept weekly reference notes on each student and team meeting minutes were kept to monitor indicators of progress and problems.

Early Results. Teacher reports in team meetings and their weekly reference notes have been closely monitored for evidence of perceived changes in students, program success, and problem surfacing. During the first four weeks, all four teachers reported that students were largely uncooperative and that several participated in classroom disruptions. Interviews of the teachers that worked with these students during the first two quarters of the school year indicated that these patterns had existed for these students prior to their entrance into the program. In addition, during these first four weeks three of the four teachers dispensed fourteen detentions, eight office referrals, and an uncounted number of formal reprimands. As teachers began to share and assist each other in classroom management approaches, share information about their successes with students that other teachers were less successful with, and regular parent contacts were made with positive and necessary negative information shared, and as teachers began to share instructional strategies with each other, students became more cooperative and fewer classroom disruptons occured. During the next seven weeks of the program, only six detentions were dispensed by these teachers with only one office referral.

Teachers now report that the students have undergone substantial change on the dimensions of classroom cooperation, attitude and voluntary participation. The

BLAIR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

TEAMING PROGRAM

Classroom Environment Scale

Subscale Comparisons: Male to Female

Experimental Group

Subscale I - Involvement in Class Activities

Males (N = 8)
Range of Responses, 0-4 (f=2)
Mean Score, 1.75 (low)
Females (N = 15)
Range of Responses, 0-5 (f=5)
Mean Score, 3.5 (low high)

Subscale II - Teacher Support

Males (N =8)
Range of Responses, 0-5 (f=3,4,5)
Mean Score, 3.25 (low high)
Females (N = 15)
Range of Responses, 1-5 (f=4)
Mean Score, 3.53 (low high)

Subscale III - Order and Organization

Males (N = 8)
Range of Responses, 2-4 (f=4)
Mean Score, 3.25 (average)
Females (N = 15)
Range of Responses, 1-6 (f=7)
Mean Score, 3.75 (low high)

Subscale IV - Innovation

Males (N = 8)
Range of Responses, 1-5 (f=2)
Mean Score, 3.125 (average)
Females (N = 15)
Range of Responses, 1-5 (f=7)
Mean Score, 3.4 (average)

ODU/NPS SPECIAL STUDENT CONCERNS PROJECT

for DISCIPLINE

BLAIR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

TEAMING PROGRAM

Pretest Results: Experimental Group

Test Date--January 27, 1981

Classroom Environment Scale

Summary

N = 23

Subscale I - Involvement in Class Activities

Norm: Median Score = 2.5

Range of Responses, 1-5 (f=2)

Mean Score, 2.8 (average)

Subscale II - Teacher Support

Norm: Median Score = 2.5

Range of Responses, 1-5 (f=3,4)

Mean, 3.4 (high average)

Subscale III - Order and Organization

Norm: Median Score = 3

Range of Responses, 1-6 (f=4)

Mean, 3.5 (low high)

Subscale IV - Innovation

Norm: Median Score =3

Range of Responses, 1-5 (f=4)

Mean, 3.12 (average)

BLAIR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

TEAMING PROGRAM

Classroom Environment Scale

Subscale Comparisons: Black to White

Experimental Group

Subscale I -- Involvement in Class Activities

White tudents (N=11)

Range of Responses, 0-5 (f=4)

Mean Score, 2.82 (average)

Black Students (N=11)

Range of Responses, 1-5 (f=2)

Mean Score, 2.55 (average)

Subscale II -- Teacher Support

White Students (N=11)

Range of Responses, 0-5 (f=5)

Mean Score, 3.64 (low high)

Black Students (N=11)

Range of Responses, 1-4 (f=4)

Mean Score, 3.09 (high average)

Subscale III -- Order and Organization

White Students (N=11)

Range of Responses, 1-6 (f=2,4)

Mean Score, 3.18 (average)

Black Students (N=11)

Range of Responses, 2-4 (f=4)

Mean Score, 3.55 (low high)

Subscale IV -- Innovation

White Students (N=11)

Range of Responses, 1-5 (f=2)

Mean Score, 2.64 (low average)

Black Students (N=11)

Range of Responses, 1-5 (f=5)

Mean Score, 3.55 (low high)

BLAIR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

TEAMING PROGRAM

Quality of School Life Index

Summary

Experimental Group

N = 23

Subscale I - Satisfaction with School

Norms: low, 0-1; median, 2-3; high, 4-5

Range of Responses, 0-5 (f=1)

Mean Score, 1.3 (low)

Subscale II - Commitment to Classwork

Norms: low, 0-3; median, 4-6; high, 7-11

Range of Responses, 0-11 (f=1)

Mean Score, 4.956 (median)

Subscale III - Reactions to Teachers

Norms: low, 0-3; median, 4-6; high, 7-11

Range of Responses, 1-10 (f=5)

Mean Score, 5.347 (high median)

BLAIR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

TEAMING PROGRAM

Quality of School Life Index

Subscale Comparisons: Male to Female

Experimental Group

Subscale I - Satisfaction with School

Males (N = 8)

Range of Responses, 0-4 (f=4)

Mean Score, .875 (low)

Females (N = 15)

Range of Responses, 0-5 (f=0,1)

Mean Score, 1.933 (low)

Subscale II - Commitment to Classwork

Males (N = 8)

Range of Responses, 1-5 (f=4)

Mean Score, 3.625 (high low)

Females (N = 15)

Range of Responses, 0-11 (f=34)

Mean Score, 5.133 (median)

Subscale III - Reactions to Teachers

Males (N = 8)

Range of Responses, 2-9 (f=3)

Mean Score, 4.25 (low median)

Females (N = 15)

Range of Responses, 1-10 (f=5)

Mean Score, 5.93 (high median)

BLAIR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

TEAMING PROGRAM

Quality of School Life Index

Subscale Comparisons: Black to White

Experimental Group

Subscale I -- Satisfaction with School

White Students (N=11)

Range of Responses, 0-5 (f=0,2)

Mean Score, 1.45 (low)

Black Students (N=11)

Range of Responses, 0-4 (f=0,1)

Mean Score, 1.09 (low)

Subscale II -- Commitment to Classwork

White Students (N=11)

Range of Responses, 0-11 (f=4)

Mean Score, 4.82 (median)

Black Students (N=11)

Range of Responses, 1-6 (f=3,5)

Mean Score, 4.27 (low median)

Subscale III -- Reactions to Teachers

White Students (N=11)

Range of Responses, 2-10 (f=5,7,10)

Mean Score, 6.45 (low high)

Black Students (N=11)

Range of Responses, 1-7 (f=3)

Mean Score, 4.0 (low median)

pretest scores for both the experimental and control group students were quite revealing on several characterisitcs of seventh grade students. As a group, students scored low on the Satisfaction with School subscale of the Quality of School Life Index (QSL) and high on the Order and Organization subscale of the Classroom Environment Scale (CES), other measures were average. In examining the scores (shown on next several pages), conducting item analyses of each subscale and perusing the professional literature concerning the needs and characteristics of junior high age students; we developed the following interpretation of their scores. Satisfaction with school was a low score for these students, particularly Black students, because the motivations that served them prior to puberty had been eroded by development and new motivations had not yet been developed (Jones, 1980; Erickson, 1963). When satisfaction with school is low and perceptions of order and organization are high, this second measure then has a punitive or oppressive connotation. Many of the other measures were average simply due to some remaining aspects of the elementary school focus on respecting adults and obedience parameters of childhood. Our own examination of student progress in secondary schools indicates that unless satisfaction with school can be enhanced, all other aspects of schooling measured by the several subscales named above will begin a general decline. Satisfaction with school is of course a function of student goals in relation with percieved use of schooling. We are presently engaged in implementing aspects of the Origin-Pawn theory of Richard deCharms (1976) as one method to establish relationships between schooling and student life goals. However, re-organizing schooling to respond more directly to student life concerns and developmental issues, as well as identity formation and racial factor impact will also serve to enhance student satisfaction with schooling (Jones, 1969). Post-testing is scheduled for mid-May of the current academic year.

Teaming Program for High Risk Ninth Graders

This program was designed to provide students with severe disciplinary histories an alternative program during their high school freshman year that could:

1. Engage students in academic and personal interactions with teachers who seek their success.

2. Provide students with self-concept and motivational enhancement learning activities.

3. Provide credited instruction for students in the four primary subject areas (English, social studies , math and science).

4. Engage students in activities designed to help them alter their school-related attitudes and behaviors.

5. Provide students with a forum for raising and discussing and receiving assist-assistance on issues of concern to them in school, home and community settings.

6. Reduce office referrals and suspensions.

7. Reduce absenteeism among target students.

Teachers for the program were primarily selected from a pool of teachers that students reported as good instructors, understanding people, and those who had low or relatively low referral rates. No math teacher was among this group. A math teacher was added at our request. The selection was made by the math department head. The final group of four teachers volunteered for the program. The courses selected for the program wwre general courses in the four major subject areas. Though they all had pre-determined content and objectives as determined by the school system's department of instruction, Teachers were free to use any instructional approaches they deemed necessary. Teachers were also free to alter minor aspects of the content of these courses but all objectives were pre-set and unchangeable.

The program called for the teachers involved to be provided the same planning period, and duty free lunch periods to allow for team meetings and other project activity as well as increased availability to students. Team meetings were scheduled to occur once weekly. Each meeting's agenda was to include: discussion of the progress of each student, comparing student progress in each class and designing strategies to overcome problems that appear, teacher sharing and transfering of classroom management and instructional strategies, and program evaluation and redirection. This program was also to take place in the latter half of the school year.

Research/Evaluation Design. Experimental and control groups of 25 students each were randomly selected from a pool of 75 ninth graders in one high school who exhibited the most severe disciplinary histories among that class. All of the students were black with the exception of two white male students. There were only three female students, all black. As with the earlier described Student

Intervention Continuum (pp. 9 and 10), we initially established a design of pre-and post-testing in experimental and control groups using self-concept and classroom environment scales. However, again, the school could not find a method of collecting either group of students in significant enough numbers to make assessment worthwhile, and several of the students who could be gathered up refused to take the tests.

In lieu of these more formal measures, the project has developed a design that utilizes secondary statistical data as indicators of the disciplinary success of the program, i.e.; attendance and disciplinary records. Student grades and teacher reports were included in this design to assess academic and effort improvement. The plan for data collection and analysis is identical to that developed for the Student Intervention Continuum.

Early Results. Though approved by the school's administration and publicly supported by the school system's leadership, several factors prevented the proper implementation of the program. First, confusion developed between the school administration and the system's department of instruction over whether or not the students were to receive credit for the team courses and over what courses should actually be taught (the system had recently moved the ninth grades to high schools out of junior high schools and graduation crediting does not begin until ninth grade). Secondly, administrators responsible for scheduling received erroneous information from counsellors concerning which courses the selected students were eligible for as a group (this is not unusual in this particular school). Third, the administrator responsible for scheduling created a schedule for the program that eliminated lunch for all of the students, did not provide the teachers with a common planning period, nor a duty free lunch.

As the program began, project staff time was spent attempting to get the administration to change the team's schedule — they never did, finding students who were skipping classes to eat lunch, and attemtping to work with the school system's department of instruction to clarify course offerings for the teachers and counsellors. Consequently, team mmetings did not occur and the inservice training aspects of the program for teachers was never implemented. This left the teachers involved working in a difficult situation without any support, communication or direction from project staff. The administration allowed students to leave their science class twenty minutes early to go to lunch and return to their math class twenty minutes late. However, no one informed attendance

officers or hall monitors of this arrangement. Students were then the subject of harrassment by these persons due to their known disciplinary histories. The students consequently reverted to old behaviors -- they began to skip the last two classes, go to lunch and leave school grounds -- all of which were violations of school policy punishable by suspension. Several recieved suspensions. Project staff were finally able to get the students to attend classes in larger numbers but by this time the frustrations of the schience and math teachers were high and they had become negative toward the students and did not believe that they could be taught. Their first two classes, English and social studies had become easily the stronger. Attendance rates and participation in these classes were high and students reported good relationships with those teachers. As we began to focus on these problems, the school administration removed the program's English and science teachers from classroom duty to give them new positions as teacher disciplinarians. Both of these teachers were Black and were replaced by long-term substitute teachers who were inexperienced and white. In a matter of days, students stopped attending these classes and the new teachers reported that they were afriad of the students and felt that the students did not like them. The math teacher remained on and developed highly antagonistic relationships with the students.

The former science teacher's negativism toward the students in the program were so great that anytime he had the opportunity he dispensed long-term suspensions to them. A great deal of evidence exists that several of the charges levied against these students were trumped up

As the fourth and final quarter of the school year began, we attempted to revamp the program. We selected a new English teacher with a history of student advocacy in the school, and a new science teacher who sought out project staff to volunteer his efforts. The administration was asked for a new schedule -- first through fourth periods, allowing the students a lunch period, providing the teachers with a common planning period and duty free lunch. All of these requests were met except for the student schedule. We were given a schedule wherein the students had team classes during the second and third bells and the last two bells of each day. At this point students had refused to work for the math teacher

due to her negativism and evidence of prejudice toward the students (obtained through corroborated individual student interviews and sta-f observations of class). We decided to remove her from the program and replace her with a teacher requested by the students. By this time, rumorred reputations of the program were so negative in the school that the newly selected teacher yielded to pressures from her department head to refuse to participate. We decided to drop math from the program. In English and social studies, students are seen participating in clas- activities, attending on a more regular basis and these two teachers report that learning seems to be improving (determined by grades on system mandated tests in these course).

To evaluate this program the project will tabulate the comparative disciplinary records of the students in comparison to the first two quarters of the academic year and in comparison to those records of the control group.

Student Leadership Program

This program was established in one project site school in response to teacher and student realization that: (1) Primarily middle and upper class white students and a few middle class Black students were involved in major student organizations and in student government, and (2) leadership is exercised informally by significant numbers of students in neighborhood, peer, racial and classroom groups — sometimes positively, sometimes negatively. It was felt that many of the students who exercised informal leadership had probably never considered what they do as leadership and had probably never considered the effects they may have on others. In discussions with students, it was determined that many of the conflicts that exist in the school, failure rates and some discipline problems are due to the leadership of a small number of students.

Based on these ideas, it was decided to organize a student leadership program that involved formal and informal leadership in the school in examining and dealing with student-named problems. This program was designed to:

1. Help students better understand the nature and responsibilities of their leadership.
2. Recognize their own leadership.
3. Begiin to help students to use both formal and informal leadership in more creative and constructive ways.

Formal leaders were, of course, easy to locate. They constitute the residencies of clubs and other student organizations, they are elected class officers, and elected student government representatives. All of these students would participate in the program. Informal leaders were, of course, much more difficult to locate. We determined to use two methods to locate these students. The more direct method was a sociogrammatic survey administered to all of the students to determine who the students were that led others in various positive and negative directions. Our back-up method was to use teacher reports and counselor reports of positive and negative leadership exercised in the schools. Through these methods we identified nearly 40 students who exercise informal leadership in the schools. The opening activity of the program was a day-long saturday workshop focused on presenting, discussing and analyzing leadership patterns and skills; and on issues facing the school from the students' point of view. A number of the types of informal leaders we sought attended these workshops along with the school's formal student leaders. Out of the workshops came a listing of critical issues at the high school. Topping the list was racism and race related issues.

Students then requested that we develop a series of workshops designed to explore the issues of racism as they exist in the nation at large and as they exist in the school and the surrounding community. To date, several of these workshops have been held and attended by a representative cross-section of Black students. No white students ever came to the sessions. Workshops have been held after school hours, each session lasting anywhere from one to two hours. Students attending have reported that these sessions have revealed new information to them about Black history, have sharpened their understanding of the nature of racism and its impact on individuals, and equipped them with some ideas on how to combat racism in their schools. There is no research or evaluation plan for this program except session by session evaluation of worth and utility. Project staff interact regularly with student participants to determine whether or not these workshops have aided students in the process of schooling. It is hoped that as these activities spread, and greater communication takes place among Black students that some form of Black student organization will be initiated by the participants.

A Process for Developing Parent Involvement Programs

During the first year of project activity, a parent, teacher, student workgroup was developed in each school to assist in the naming of issues importantfor research, and in the proper and efficient conduct of research. These groups were composed of interested teachers on a volunteer basis, parents of students involved in significant numbers of disciplinary incidents, and students with significant disciplinary histories (no parent-child combinations were allowed in the same workgroup). In the process of developing and implementing these workgroups, we conducted a document examination of parental involvement in the school system, interviewed parents who had been active in or with the school that their child attended , and conversed with several administrators about parental involvement as well as representatives of community agencies that have interests with schooling. From data, we concluded that:

1. Attention had been paid to parental involvement by the school system at the elementary level and only during public concflict at the secondary level.

2. Plans for parental involvement that had occured historically had been initiated solely by administrators and defined by them, or through court order, or through strong public pressure through the press or community agencies.

3. Most Black parents that were involved in schools served in the capacity of aides — volunteer or paid, and that most white parents participated through PTA or advisory council structures.

4. Most attempts at innovative parent involvement or communication were chemes that were attempted only once and usually without any advocates in the target community.

5. Attempts at parental involvement by lower class parents or Black-oriented community agencies were usually rejected or sabotaged.

6. The overwhelming majority of administrators and a significant number of teachers felt that most poor and lower class parents, particularly black parents, did not want to be involved and did not really care about their children's education.

Based on these conclusions, we felt that the one approach that had never been attempted in creating better parental involvement was to first determine those areas where school people, parents, and community agencies all feel that parental involvement is good and necessary, where alllof these groups state a willingness to be involved , and inwhich all of these groups can participate in developing programs. We assumed that points of conjunction between these groups would probably exist and that these ppints would be the most logical places to begin to improve parental involvement in secondary schools.

We first surveyed teachers in two junior high schools to determine what they considered to be necessary forms of parental involvement and forms that they would participate in (teachers in both schools had already reported in the previously noted Organizational Environment Survey, p. 5, that they felt there was a strong need for more and better parental involvement in secondary schools). This list was then compared to those generated by parents in the six site school workgroups. The two lists combined constituted a survey instrument for a door to door survey campaign in selected poor and selected Black neighborhoods. At this writing, a team of parents in each school is compiling and analyzing the results of these surveys to determine the top three types of parental involvement appropriate to each school. At that point, teams of teachers and parents in each school will work with project staff to develop the designated programs and assist intheir implementation in their school.

Evaluation Design. The parental involvement program process outlined in brief above will be evaluated solely on the bases of (1) whether or not successful programs result from the efforts, and (2) whether or not larger numbers of parents become involved in the schools, an d (3) whether or not these programs can serve to help reduce the disproportionate involvement of Black students in disciplinary actions. In addition, parents, teachers and students (those involved in the programs or not) will be surveyed after reasonable time has elapsed after implementation to determine their perceptions of the benefits of the efforts.

Supportive Data in the School System. A cursory examination of secondary schools in this system have surfaced reports from parents, teachers and students that indicate that those schools where parents are meaningfully involved (as determined by teacher, administrator, student, and parent perceptions) that discipline problems tend to recede, teacher-student relationships tend to be more personal, less antagonistic, and more productive. This result, however, may be at least in part a function of the nature of building leadership that either creates or allows the creation of meaningful programs of parent involvement. Further study will need to be done to more exactly isolate causal factors.

Motivation Enhancement Program

In one of the project's site high schools, students appear to have life goals that are unrealistic for their situations or they do not seem to have goals that schools,past the elementary school level, can assist them toward. This is one source of avoidance behavior in students in the system's high schools and perhaps a major contributor to failure rates. Where there is no reason to put forth effort, effort is usually not expended. In addition, many students do not believe that their lives will ever be fulfilling or economically feasible based on what can be observed in their communities. Finally, many students do not believe that they are capable of exercising any control over their personal destiny and believe that life is a result of luck or fate.

Project staff began to examine various approaches to student self-concept development and motivation enhancement. We determined that the Motivation Enhancement approaches of Richard deCharms (1976, 1979) were the most comprehensive and promising of those currently available and decided to attempt to implement the concept at the high school cited above. DeCharms research over the past twelve years has led him and his associates to develop a program for improving motivation in schools that has been shown to measurably affect students' internal motivation patterns resulting in improved student behaviors and increased school success. This approach revolves around the "Origin-Pawn" concept, and instructional practices that lead to increased student responsibility for learning. Under this approach, teachers are trained in several areas:

1. Understanding personal causation.
2. Developing personal purpose and commitment.
3. Experiences that enhance "origin" behavior -- behavior which is positively motivated, optimistic, confident, and accepting of challenges.
4. Choosing realistic goals and developing concrete plans to reach those goals.
5. Learning how to increase other peoples' origin behaviors.

Once training is complete, teachers are then involved in developing classroom materials that emphasize self-concept development, achievement motivation, realistic goal setting, an d the origin-pawn concept. Students are taught the concept in a

minimal amount of classroom time. Teachers are then led to reorganize regular instructional content and instructional strategies to:

1. Provide choice.
2. Reinforce goal setting and decision-making.
3. Reinforce the exercise of personal responsibility.

DeCahrms reports several hours of consecutive or continuous trainign time. we were only able to obtain six hours of inservice time spread across three weeks. However, one social studies teacher did implement the concept and provided evidence of greater on task behavior in the students in his subject class, improved grades on school system made tests in the course , and improved attendance. Another social studies teacher allowed project staff to demonstrate the concept over two weeks in his History and Geography class, a low academic grouping of primarily black students. The unit for these two weeks was political geography, international economic issues, and potential changes in world power arrangements.

Students reported that these were the best two weeks of the school year for them as a result of the class. Three students reported that they had gone home and taught some of the concepts and ideas to their parents that were learned in class. During those two weeks, there were no detentions dispensed, no office referrals, and no classroom disruptions. Prior to the demonstration, the teacher had reported that he is constantly dispensing detentions and referring students to the office for disciplinary reasons. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, the social studies teacher became hostile toward project personal and desired no further contact with us or the motivational concepts, in spite of their demonstrated success.

Though we began this effort with a group of nine teachers in social studies and science, we terminated the effort with only one teacher having implemented the concept, and one teacher allowing a demonstration. This condition is indicative of the attitudes of many educators in the school system that do not wish to change their approaches even when beeter student behavior and improved student learning has been shown to be the potential result.

Summative Analysis

As we stated at the outset of this paper, the data presented in this paper on the efficacy and success of the programs described is highly tentative, preliminary, and without extensive rigor. However, we believe that the data contain strong indicators of initial success and potential long-term success. Much of what has been presented has already demonstrated that educational and other programs can be implemented in public secondary schools in urban areas that may significantly reduce the disproportionate involvement of Black students in failure and disciplinary actions. We have shown also how other programs and approaches to discipline related problems and issues can serve to prevent the occurence of discipline problems -- most notably in the transfer of students from elementary schools to junior high schools.

Though not one of the programs that we have implemented have operated with the design intended, and though none have been without serious difficulties in instruction and with school administration; they have all shown some positive results. Properly implemented, broadened, with full administrative support and participation, program effects could be much clearer. Subsequent reports after final data collection and analysis will determine the initial successes of project efforts.

Perhaps one the more pervasive difficulties we have encountered is the lack of inservice education time available to the project in its various site schools. The system has adopted an inservice educational program designed to create greater uniformity in teaching practices in the school system. This program utilizes all but nine hours of teacher inservice time each year. Program expansion will necessitate a much larger allotment of inservice time for participating teachers.

Due to the tightness of personnel and time resources, there were several concerns that the project was unable to address. Among these were experimentation with in-school suspension programs, retraining administrators in new styles of disciplinary interactions with students, and human rrelations training of teachers in general to improve the overall environment and attitudes of urban public schools.

Conclusion

In the preceding pages we have attempted to describe what appear to be some promising practices in providing alternatives to discipline for urban public schools. They are alternatives to discipline because to not make efforts such as these, which attempt to make learning worthwhile and involving for students while meeting a broader spectrum of their academic, racial and personal needs dooms school systems to the constantly escalating battle of increasing their resource outlays for discipline and discipline related activities, continuing the decades-old pattern of school failure for Black and other lower-class children, and increasing negativism and defensiveness by the teaching and school administration professions. We do not see these efforts as a panacea by any means. But efforts in the appropriate directions toward more human teaching and more responsive organizational formats will assist the profession to better serve its urban constituents.

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